



August 11, 2022

### **Branches, Boughs, and Fruit**

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

This week's letter will be a day early, as tomorrow, Friday, at 5:30 a.m. I will be at the hospital to have surgery on my left knee.

Last week in my letter, we discussed "And All the Trees" as well as the Feast of Tabernacles.

Most of us anticipate the autumn change of colors, coming sometime soon after we return from the Feast of Tabernacles. Leaves on deciduous trees change from various shades of Green to Yellow, Red, Orange, and Brown. Various crop leaves also change color such as Corn, Sunflowers, and Soy Beans. I really enjoy the beautiful autumn colors.

Here's a trivia question. What conifer changes the color of its needles in the fall and then loses the needles before winter?

That would be the Larch tree (also called the Tamarack). The Western Larch is much bigger than the Eastern Larch. But they both display those bright Yellow needles in the fall season. Like I mentioned last week, trees are always of interest to me, and a part of God's creation I admire.

Part of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles involved gathering branches of trees and constructing booths or huts from the branches. *"And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. 42 You shall live in booths seven days."* (Leviticus 23:40, 42)

I mentioned we'd discuss these scriptures. I also will be talking about this during the Feast of Tabernacles this fall.

It is a little puzzling that the branches were collected and then assembled into the booths on the first day of the Feast, and that they spent time in the booths for seven days, (not for eight days).

There is something about the ritual that fits with performing it on the first day of the Feast. Notice that fruit was also collected and evidently displayed in the hut or hung from the roof of the tabernacle. The Hebrew word translated "fruit" in v. 40 is translated as "fruit" 113 times in the Authorized Version and is translated as fruit in v.40 in most other translations. The Hebrew word translated "boughs" in v.40 is *a different Hebrew word* than the Hebrew word translated "fruit." The Feast of Tabernacles is labeled "*the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end*" in Exodus 23:16 and Exodus 34:22. This Festival was a time to celebrate and rejoice in the abundance of the harvest which included fruit and nuts from trees, and produce of various kinds.

The ritual of constructing these huts was seldom practiced by the Israelites. During the return of some of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem, Nehemiah the governor and Ezra the priest instructed the people from the Law. They read that "*the children of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month should announce and proclaim in all their cities and in Jerusalem, saying, "Go out to the mountain, and bring olive branches, branches of oil trees, myrtle branches, palm branches, and branches of leafy trees, to make booths. . ."*" (Nehemiah 8:14-15)

Then the comment is made that "*since the days of Joshua the son of Nun until that day the children of Israel had not done so*" (v.17) The instruction has slightly different wording than that in Lev 23:40. The leaders probably paraphrased the instructions.

There are some interesting things to evaluate and contemplate concerning the ritual of taking the branches and boughs, and fruit of the trees to construct these

temporary huts or tabernacles.

I also find it interesting that during the transfiguration of Jesus and the appearance of Moses and Elijah in the vision that Peter was moved to suggest, "*let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah*" (Matthew 17:4) Why did he suggest this? Did he understand the connection of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles with the appearance of Christ in a glorified state and the resurrected Moses and Elijah at the time when the Kingdom of God would be set up?

Just some thoughts to ponder, and share, as we seek the balance of God's truth in our lives.

Arms up friends! Our prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Please do pray for us as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Hoefker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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